

# THE GRANNYTOWN GAZETTE

The Newsletter of the Alden Historical Society, Alden NY 14004

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[www.alden.erie.gov](http://www.alden.erie.gov)

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Alden Historical Society, founded in 1965, is a volunteer-supported organization whose mission is to preserve, promote and present the history of the Town of Alden and its people.

## Two Hundred Years Ago

Two hundred years ago. 1810. The area now known as Alden was part of the wilderness known as the Holland Purchase. Joseph Ellicott had completed his survey of the area and it was now open for settlement. On Ellicott's survey Alden was Township 11, Range 5. It was, at the time, part of the Town of Clarence, in Niagara County. (Erie County was formed from Niagara in 1821, the Town of Alden was split from Clarence in 1823.)

The land transaction records of the Holland Company are unreliable as to actual settlers as names were placed on the books with some men paying only a dollar with the understanding that within a year they would make a first regular payment and take their article. Thus we see the names of Jonas Van Wey, Zophar Beach, Samuel Huntington and James Rowan purchasing land in the northwestern part of Alden as early as 1806. It is not known if any of them settled on the land.

Moses Fenno, born January 15, 1773 in Milton, Massachusetts, is given credit as the first settler. In the spring of 1810, having purchased land in Lot 17 (now the Village of Alden) the preceding fall, he moved, we believe, from Darien to Alden and planted the first crops. It is said that his land was near where the old Erie Railroad depot stands.

Moses was married to Sarah (maiden name unknown) and had four children. One daughter, Rebecca, is listed as having been born in Darien in 1803. She married Nathan Clark in 1823 in Darien, had four children, and died in Jackson County, Michigan in 1875. One other daughter, Susan Maria, is also listed as having been born in New York in 1811. A son Joseph (1807) and another daughter, Margaret (1808), are listed as having been born in Vermont.

We can assume that life for the Fenno family in 1810 Alden was much like that of the Peters family of Darien. Theodore Peters told the author of The History of the Holland Purchase (1850): "Arriving upon the Purchase in the winter of 1810, our new home was a log house, with a bark roof, its crevices chinked and mudded; no jambs, but a stone back against which the fire was made. The door was hung with wooden hinges; the floor of hewed plank, and the hearth was the primitive mother earth. Around the house was a little opening in the forest of about five acres, and a log shed for the cattle."

In the fall of 1810, Joseph Freeman, William Snow, and Arunah Hibbard settled in Alden, followed in 1811 by Samuel Slade, James Crocker, Samuel Huntington, Jonas Stickney, Nathaniel Estabrook, Saxton Bailey, William Humphrey, Nathan Willis, John Webster and Aaron Bunce.

The battles of the War of 1812, especially the burning of Buffalo in the latter part of 1813, caused great alarm in the sparsely settled areas of Erie County, and many of the settlers fled eastward, returning in the spring of 1814. One of the casualties of the Battle of Black Rock on December 30, 1813 was Moses Fenno. His body was found lying in the snow with more than forty others, all stripped of clothing and mutilated.

*Karen Muchow, Curator*

## **From the President's Desk**

As we begin the year 2010 I have been reflecting on the changes that have taken place and the aspirations for the new year. The opportunity to meet at the Community Center has made it possible for us to offer diverse programs open to even more people. At the Society Building improvements and changes are happening almost monthly with new displays and a computer for the trustees to use to provide better communication with members. The monthly programs, a field trip and ways to reach out to educate and inform the residents of Alden are a priority for the Trustees. We urge each member to find a way in which they can have a part in this exciting year ahead. Please check the Opportunities to Help article in this newsletter and feel free to contact any Trustee about what you can do for your Society. Help us make this a great year.

**Roberta Vincent**, President

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## **Secretary's Corner**

Do we have your e-mail address? We really need it. In order to save postage, we would like to send this newsletter electronically to those who would be willing to receive it that way. We would like to send membership renewal notices by e-mail also. We would also like to be able to contact members about cancellations, etc. Please send your e-mail address to me at [aldenhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:aldenhistsoc@gmail.com). Thank you!

**Laura Loehr**, Secretary

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## **From the Editor**

Having been editor of the *Grannytown Gazette* since September 2003, I have decided to take a break and allow some other journalistic Society member to take charge. I have committed to edit the *Gazette* for 2010 but will not feel slighted if there is someone who would like to "step-up-to-the-plate" sooner. This would be a great opportunity for anyone who enjoys being creative and is anxious to utilize the latest and greatest software to bring our *Gazette* to the forefront of great historical society newsletters. I would be happy to work with anyone who is so inspired during 2010. the cooperation with the officers, trustees, members and the community has been absolutely superb and makes this adventure a very pleasant one.

**Carl Matthies**, Editor

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The Board of Trustees wishes to thank Conrad Borucki and the Alden Art Club for the donation of an Edith Bensley watercolor of the ocean. Edith was a member of the Society and we are proud to include one of her paintings in our collection. Thanks to Conrad and Carol also for the donation of Conrad's landmark painting of the Historical Society Building. It has been hung in a prominent position.

## FIRE!!

When the Empire Hotel, one of Alden's Black Water Bath inns, burned on Christmas Eve 1949, about 200 men and eleven pieces of equipment from at least six fire companies fought the blaze in zero degree temperatures from 11 pm until early morning. Ask any volunteer fireman who was there and you will get plenty of details.

The Town of Alden is fortunate to have four active fire companies with trained and dedicated volunteers. Any volunteer who has fought fires can give a "remember when" story.

Many fires have been spectacular, but probably the worst one took place before there were organized fire companies. The entire business block, from Exchange Street westward in the village was destroyed in 1866. The buildings were promptly rebuilt. Fires in those days were fought using hand-pumped hose carts with water supplied by bucket brigades.

By 1890 two volunteer fire companies had been formed in the village and more sophisticated equipment had been purchased. The Town Line Volunteer Fire Company was organized in 1918, and Crittenden and Millgrove followed in 1931. Although today there is a bit of rivalry among the companies, when the siren blows and the call goes out for more help, all respond as needed.

The town has had some spectacular fires. In the village, the frame Methodist Church burned in 1928—twice. The second blaze happened while reconstruction was still under way. In Crittenden, the Presbyterian Church on Crittenden Road north of Genesee was destroyed in 1944, and later, the feed mill with its supply of grain and volatile dust created a spectacular blaze. Millgrove lost several general stores and the frame Millgrove Bible Church, which at the time was not being used for worship services, but which had served the community since the 1860s.

When four railroads crossed the town, and coal-fired engines were sending out sparks, grass fires were a constant threat. As a rule, most of them had to be fought on foot and with brooms that were routinely carried on the fire engines.

Most the most publicized and dramatic fire occurred in 1964 when fire at Impact Container Corporation in Alden's Industrial Park on Walden Avenue ignited pressurized canisters containing such products as paint, benzine and propane and sent them like incendiary rockets along a half-mile area of destruction. State Police and Sheriff Department personnel evacuated the area. Because of the possibility that large storage tanks of propane might explode, the staff at the nearby Erie County Home were alerted to prepare for evacuation. Fortunately, that did not happen. In the end three homes, outbuildings, nine tractor trailer trucks and two cars were destroyed. At least seven fire companies responded to the fire. News stations sent out reporters and helicopters to record the blazes, but in the end all were thankful there was no loss of life.

The four fire companies have added other services to their roles, but that is another story.

We are truly thankful for the dedication of so many men and women who meet regularly for training and work sessions and maintain constant readiness for emergencies.

Ruth Davis

## **Opportunities to Help the Society**

There are many ways **you** can help the Alden Historical Society. Check the list below and contact the listed person.

1. Serve as a member of a committee:  
Publicity—Judy Hotchkin (937-6894) or Carl Matthies (937-7433)  
Program—Roberta Vincent (937-9256)  
Buildings & Grounds—Paul Werner (937-9634) or Fred Blowers (937-9417)  
Collections—Keith Stone (937-6050)  
Membership—Judy Hotchkin (937-6894)  
Fund Raising—Ellie DeFilippo (937-7953)
2. Serve as a Saturday House-Sitter, welcoming visitors and watching over our collections.  
Contact Keith Stone. (937-6050)
3. Serve as a host or hostess for a program meeting—welcoming guests and supplying and serving refreshments. Contact Laura Loehr. (937-6346)
4. Serve as a housekeeper for a month, vacuuming and dusting. Contact Paul Werner. (937-9634)
5. Help with the mailing of the newsletter. Contact Carl Matthies. (937-7433)
6. Input data about our collections on the Society's computer. Contact Karen Muchow. (937-6400)
7. Retype a lengthy report about the Webster Collection. May be done at home. Contact Karen Muchow. (937-6400)
8. Donate to a fund to install Internet access on the Society's computer. Contact Ellie DeFilippo. (937-7953)

If you have questions about any of the above opportunities, please contact the listed person.

## **ITEMS FOR SALE**

The maker of our collectible buildings has retired. We do have a very limited number of the landmark collectibles left—Bennett's Manufacturing, Wahl Brothers/Momberger's/Alden Medical Supply, Neeland's Dairy/Country Village Pet Care, Bandstand, Alden Sign, Ewell Free Library, Simme's Meats/Henry's Candy. We also have five 3' by 6' buntings for sale, plus Neeland's bottles.

A new resident of Alden, Angelo Daluisio, has copies of his book, *Porch Passages*, for sale at the Historical Building. For over two decades he has been recording his experiences and memories—each and all centered around the porches of his life.

## **CENTURY HOUSE SIGNS**

If your house was built before 1911 it qualifies as one of Alden's Century Homes. Your home has earned the right to proudly wear a century home plaque. Alden's Century Homes are (with the owner's permission) photographed. These photos are kept in the historical society's archives. Century home plaques can be purchased from the Alden Historical Society by stopping in at the Historical Building on Saturday and completing a brief history of your house. Plaques cost \$35.00 each.

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## MONTHLY PROGRAMS

JANUARY 14, 2010 ..... Wash Up!

7 pm, Community Center

*Hostesses Mary Ellen Werner and Ellie DeFilippo*

With the new year, we all like to clean up and get a new start. Society member Susan Muench has prepared a program about the history of washing and laundry. Come find out what has been involved over time in keeping households, and the people in them, clean and sparkling. Maybe we'll find some new old ideas!

FEBRUARY 4, 2010 ..... Trustee Meeting

7 pm, Historical Society Building  
Open to the Membership

FEBRUARY 11, 2010 ..... Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Boy Scouts of America

7 pm, Historical Society Building

*Hostesses Karen Muchow and Kris Rogers*

It was in 1910 that the Boy Scouts of America got their start here in the U.S., after having been started by Lord Baden-Powell in the U.K. Our own Ralph Davis has been involved in the Boy Scouts here in Alden for many years, and will share with us the history of Boy Scouting in Alden and across the nation. We will meet in the Historical Society Building to take advantage of the special display prepared for this observance by our Curator, Karen Muchow.

MARCH 11, 2010 ..... 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Settler in Alden

7 pm, Community Center

*Hostesses Laura Loehr and Roberta Vincent*

And it was in the spring of 1810 that Moses Fenno became the first documented settler to set his hand to the plow in what we now call our home town. A speaker from the Holland Land Company Museum in Batavia will share with us about the settlement of this area, and what life was like during that time. Refreshments served this evening will be based on refreshments known to be made during this era. With spring almost here, we'll appreciate why Moses Fenno set up his farm very close to where we meet, and planted his first crops. This is a prelude to the meeting in April, which will also be farm-related.

## **ALDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING:**

The ALDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S many exhibits are located in the Alden Historical Society Building at 13213 Broadway in the village, across from the Alden State Bank. The mission of the Historical Society is to preserve, promote and present the history of Alden and its people.

## **HOURS**

The Alden Historical Society Building is open to the public every Saturday from 10 to 2 pm.

Tours for individuals and groups may be arranged by calling 937-3700, 937-6400 or email [aldenhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:aldenhistsoc@gmail.com)

## **MEETINGS:**

**Program meetings** are generally held at the Alden Community Center on the second Thursday of the each month at 7:00 pm. Notices will be published in the Alden Advertiser in advance of the program.

These informative and interesting programs are open to the public. Many times a guest speaker is present. You are very welcome to come and share your memories and experiences about the evening's program. Afterwards enjoy an informal social complete with homemade refreshments.

**Trustee meetings** are held at the Alden Historical Building at 7:00 pm on the first Thursday of the month in February, April, June, August, October and December (even-numbered months).

The trustee meetings are open to the membership.

## **OFFICERS**

*President.....*Roberta Vincent

*Vice President....*Ellie DeFilippo

*Secretary.....*Laura Loehr

*Treasurer.....*Ralph Davis

*Curator.....* ...Karen Muchow

*Society Historian.....*Ellen Schenkler

*Alden Town Historian*

*Leonard Weisbeck*

*Alden Town Board Liaison*

*Arlene Cooke*

*Editor.....*Carl Matthies

*Publicity.....*Judy Hotchkin

## **TRUSTEES**

Fred Blowers

Ralph Davis

Ellie DeFilippo

Judy Hotchkin

Laura Loehr

Carl Matthies

Sal Sardella

Ellen Schenkler

Keith Stone

Roberta Vincent

Paul Werner

## **Comments made in the year 1955!**

I'll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it's going to be impossible to buy a week's groceries for \$20. -

Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging a dime just to mail a letter?

When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage.

Thank goodness I won't live to see the day the government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to Congress.

If they think I'll pay 50 cents for a hair cut, forget it!

## WELCOME NEW & RENEWED MEMBERS

### NEW ANNUAL MEMBERS

Amy C. Froebel  
Ronald Rebmann

### NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Norman & Nancy Taylor

### BUSINESS MEMBERS

Alden State Bank  
Neil & Strong Attorney  
The Elwood-Jordans Agency Inc.

### RENEWED MEMBERS

June Beyers  
Howard Ehrenheim  
Mary Ann Sardella  
Richard Savage  
Sharon Schmitz  
Sherry Sojka

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

New members are always welcome. Your support will ensure that the Alden Historical Society will continue to grow and prosper for years to come. Please make check payable as noted below. Thank you for your support.

### DUES

Single .....\$8.00	Name .....
Family ... ..\$12.00	Address .....
Lifetime.....\$75.00	.....
Business....\$45.00	Phone.....Email.....

A check payable to: *ALDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY* may be mailed to:

Judy Hotchkin, Membership Secretary  
Alden Historical Society  
13213 Broadway  
Alden, NY 14004

DONATIONS AND MEMORIALS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

[aldenhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:aldenhistsoc@gmail.com)  
Phone 937 3700

A special thank you to the *ALDEN ADVERTISER* for donating membership cards to the Alden Historical Society.

# ALDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### WINTER 2010

PROGRAM MEETINGS Community Center 7 pm	TRUSTEE MEETINGS Historical Society Bldg. 7 pm
January 14..... Wash Up!	
February 11..... Happy 100 <sup>th</sup> Birthday, Boy Scouts of America (at the Historical Society Building)	February 4 ..... Historical Society Bldg. Members Invited
March 11..... 200 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Settler in Alden	

ALDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
13213 BROADWAY  
ALDEN, NY 14004

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